

# DENISON AVENUE.

JANUARY 25TH, 1861.

## TO THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE CHURCH,

Having received a copy of a Memorial which has been addressed to the Lord Bishop of Toronto, by certain members of St. Stephen's Church, and others, and his reply thereto, I think that in justice to myself, I ought no longer to be silent, as his Lordship, by his sentence, appears to endorse the erroneous statements which have been published and widely circulated. In His Lordship's letter I find the following passage: "*On reference to the Rev. Mr. McCollum, I found that Mr. Denison, the patron of St. Stephen's, had summarily dismissed him from the ministry of that church, allowing him only three months' notice.*" This I consider an outrageous proceeding, and altogether indefensible." Such a sentence of condemnation from his Lordship on a mere statement, entirely devoid of truth, from Mr. McCollum, has caused me the greatest surprise and pain. Much has been said and done during the last fortnight by members of the congregation and others, calculated to excite my indignation, and to call for a reply. I have thought it right, however, not to publish a word in my defence, feeling in my own conscience that I had acted rightly. I could submit to misapprehensions, and even to wilful and absolute misrepresentations on the part of such persons, instigated I may hope by a false and partial view of matters only having been set before them. But, since my conduct has been represented to my Bishop, by one from whom something different might have been expected, in such a light as to bring down upon me the grave censure to which I have referred, I now feel myself bound, in justice to the cause of truth, in justice to my own reputation, to set forth the facts of the case as they really stand. His Lordship says, that on reference to the Rev. Mr. McCollum he has learned,

1st. That the Patron of St. Stephen's had *summarily dismissed* him from the ministry of that church.

2nd. That the Patron had *allowed him only three months' notice.*

To both these charges I give a *most direct and emphatic denial.*

In proof of the truthfulness of my statement, I need but refer to the correspondence (printed and circulated by Mr. McCollum or his friends) which passed between Mr. McCollum and myself on the subject, a copy of which was forwarded by me to his Lordship at the time; another copy I believe was forwarded by Mr. McCollum.

1st. It may be seen by reference to this, that my first letter was one simply of remonstrance, such as might have been written by any member of the congregation. In it the following alternatives were proposed: (1st.) Either a change was to be made in St. Stephen's, (2nd,) or I and my family would be obliged to leave, (3rd.) or that the subject must be brought before the Bishop.

This last course, *Mr. McCollum will well remember, was the one agreed on between us*, in case any difference or dispute should arise; but rather than leave the matter to be settled by the Bishop, he at once sent me his resignation, to the surprise of no one more than myself.

How a distinct and definite *self-chosen resignation* can by any perversion of language or reason be represented to his Lordship as a "summary dismissal" I am quite at a loss to imagine. 2nd. The next charge, that I had given him only three months' notice is so gross, so palpably in contradiction of his own printed statement, that I can only consider its assertion as an act of judicial blindness. The simplest child must see, on reference to the correspondence, that the proposal respecting the three months was *Mr. McCollum's own; it did not originate with me at all.* Such an idea I had never entertained.

For myself, I can only say that if three years had been named, instead of three months, I do not see how I could have declined acceding to the request.

I subjoin the following extracts from correspondence to verify my statements.

"A change must take place within a short time, in St. Stephen's, or my family and I must worship elsewhere."

"I remain, Rev. and dear Sir,

"ROBERT B. DENISON,

"DECEMBER 18TH, 1860.

"The inclosed note I intended to have sent to you yesterday, but I thought it better to think over it for a few hours, and have altered the last line and substituted instead, and bring the subject before the Bishop.

"Do not for a moment imagine that I send this for the purpose of hurting your feelings in any way. You preach as you do, no doubt, because you think it your duty to do so. I adopt this course because I feel that my duty dictates it to me.

"I remain, Rev. and dear Sir,

"ROBERT B. DENISON.

"ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, DEC. 18TH, 1860.

DEAR MR. DENISON,—Your letter has not surprised me, and do not let the writing of it pain you in the least. I have felt this long time, that my preaching the naked and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ—though acceptable to the ninety-nine hundredths of the congregation, was not acceptable to all, and finding that the minority ruled in the Church, I have been contemplating a change, and intended leaving a place where my hands were so tied and my usefulness so impeded, as soon as I could; not, however, without giving my Bishop the necessary notice, that all things might be done in a manner becoming a Christian.

"I cannot move my family, nor break my engagements with my pupils in a moment; I, therefore, hope three months will not be too long to stop. I could not move my wife and children sooner.

"DENISON AVENUE, DEC. 22, 1860.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,—I agree with you cordially as to your concluding to leave St. Stephen's—which I find from yours of the 18th you had been contemplating some time, and had determined upon previous to any communication from me on the subject.

"I can have, of course, no objection to your staying three months, as you desire; but you will yourself see the necessity of it being so fixed, as I must make some definite arrangement about a successor. Shall we say the last Sunday in March next, or sooner, if you think proper?

"I must reserve to myself the right of answering your two last notes, if occasion require it.

"I beg leave to inform you that I have forwarded a copy of our correspondence to his Lordship the Bishop.

"I remain, Rev. and dear Sir,

"ROBERT B. DENISON."

From these extracts it will be seen that neither have I *summarily dismissed* Mr. McCollum, nor did I *force* him to leave with *three months'* notice. I simply, in both cases, accepted proposals from himself. From Mr. McCollum's statement in his last letter, he had been some time contemplating a change, and had determined upon it previously to any communication from me on the subject. My having proposed to refer the matter to his Lordship, is styled by him a high-handed and arbitrary proceeding.

From the above plain and truthful statement of facts, it will be seen what wilful and violent misrepresentations have been made, and I leave the impartial members of our church to judge how far I have deserved the censure contained in the Bishop's letter, above referred to.

If it had been true that I had acted in the summary and arbitrary manner falsely imputed to me by the incumbent of St. Stephen's, I should have frankly acknowledged that there were the fullest grounds for the gravest censure my Bishop could have passed upon me; and I now admit, that acting upon the representations of the case made to him, his Lordship could not have done otherwise. Since such statements have been proved grossly false, in accordance with reason and right, I must earnestly protest against the justice of it.

The fact that in the *postscript* to my *first* letter, I proposed to refer the matter to his Lordship, is an *absolute proof* that no *dismissal* could then have taken place.

Here I hoped to have stopped, but certain statements have been recently made by Mr. McCollum and his friends, which I ought not to pass unnoticed; had Mr. McCollum's reply to the address presented to him, been framed in the same spirit as that address, this would have been unnecessary.

1st. Mr. McCollum states that no hymn was permitted to be sung. His own arrangement was that nothing should be sung but what was in the Prayer Book, so that the Sunday School children,

who we both took care should each have a Prayer Book, could always join in the singing. The Communion Hymn and several others have been regularly sung. We sung, on Christmas last, an old hymn, "Ye faithful approach ye," which I had printed for the use of the congregation, with Mr. McCollum's full approval. Mr. McCollum had sole charge of the choir, and was always present at the practices.

2nd. "*No Missionary Meetings of any kind were held.*" A meeting for the Irish Society was held in the church, the Rev Mr. Hanlon being the deputation, on which occasion I did all I could to promote the comfort of the meeting, and, with my family, was present at it. I positively assert that I never by act or word interfered to prevent any meetings being held.

"A Toronto Presbyter" accuses me of the "*gross indecency of calling in a bailiff against an un-resisting clergyman!*" The so-called bailiff is well known to Mr. McCollum as my servant; has been with me for several years, and is a member of his own congregation. On errands of kindness it was, "thank you William;" but when it suited Mr. McCollum's purpose, he suddenly became a sheriff's bailiff.

It is stated in the *Echo* of 10th January last, that Mr. McCollum was "appointed by the Bishop at the opening of the church." The arrangement with Mr. McCollum was a strictly private one between him and myself, the Bishop refusing to have any thing to do with it. In consequence of this refusal it was with the greatest difficulty that I induced Mr. McCollum to meet his Lordship at his inspection of the church, on the day before it was opened. In a letter sent by me to Mr. McCollum, September 23, 1859, a copy of which is in the Bishop's hands, are the following words: "As the Bishop would not allow me to broach the subject concerning our arrangement at St. Stephen's, &c." Had any arrangement but a private one existed, no doubt Mr. McCollum would have taken the subject up at that time.

My attention having been called to the above statement in the *Echo*, I wrote to the Bishop as follows, on the 22nd of January inst.: "Having seen it stated in print that Mr. McCollum was licensed to St. Stephen's Church, by your Lordship, I shall feel much obliged, should such be the case, if your Lordship will favour me with the date of the license." The following is from the Bishop's answer: "The Reverend James Henry McCollum, A.M., was licensed to St. Stephen's Church, on the 21st day of December last; but has since signified his intention to resign," &c.

By this it will be seen that *three days after the date of his resignation*, Mr. McCollum obtained from the Bishop, without my knowledge or concurrence, a license to St. Stephen's Church.

I have no intention whatever of replying to any articles which may be written on this subject. The facts being now before you, will enable you to come to a correct conclusion.

ROBERT B. DENISON